

NEWS



American Public Health Association

800 I Street, NW
Washington, DC 20001-3710
(202) 777-APHA • Fax: (202) 777-2534
comments@apha.org • www.apha.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: David Fouse, (202) 777-2501
david.fouse@apha.org

APHA Supports the National Institutes of Health Merit Review Process

**Statement of Georges C. Benjamin, MD, FACP,
Executive Director, American Public Health Association**

Washington, DC, November 11, 2003—"The American Public Health Association supports the merit review system that has been a critical factor in the success of the National Institutes of Health (NIH).

"The reported investigation of research projects on HIV/AIDS, sexuality and risk-taking behaviors that have already been approved through the NIH's rigorous merit review process is alarming. Even more alarming is that these investigations come at the request of members of Congress and special interest advocacy groups with ideological beliefs that are at odds with the scientific focus of the studies in question.

"While congressional oversight of the merit review process is an important element in preserving the integrity and success of this nation's medical research effort, the American Public Health Association believes that oversight should not extend to making funding decisions regarding individual grants.

"NIH's scientific merit review system is the best that has been developed. It ensures that the research to be funded is of the highest scientific and technical merit. We believe that efforts to bring ideological views and politics into this system are dangerous and jeopardize critical public health research."

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The American Public Health Association, the oldest and largest organization of public health professionals, represents more than 50,000 members from over 50 public health occupations. More information is available at www.apha.org.